

Engels, Alan

From: Shanahan, Mike
Sent: Tuesday, June 27, 2017 2:46 PM
To: Bohan, Suzanne
Subject: FW: Therapy Dog Brightens Lives

Thought you might appreciate this article. I especially liked the definition of Therapy Dog.

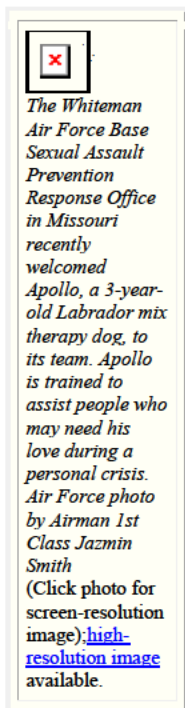
Mike

From: U.S. Department of Defense [mailto:govdelivery@subscriptions.dod.mil]
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To: Shanahan, Mike
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06/27/2017 12:29 PM CDT



Therapy Dog Brightens Lives

By Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Mary-Dale Amison

Missouri Air National Guard

WHITEMAN AIR FORCE BASE, Mo., June 27, 2017 — When Sajek, the Sexual Assault Prevention Response Office's first therapy dog was medically retired here last year, Amy Creighton began the search for a new dog.

"After speaking with several organizations, we decided to work with Warrior's Best Friend. That group then began their search for the perfect dog for our program, and after several long months of waiting, Apollo was brought into their program from a local shelter," said Creighton, who is the Missouri Air National Guard, 131st Bomb Wing's sexual assault response coordinator.

Apollo attended training for several months learning commands, Creighton said. Along with all of his "good citizen" commands such as "sit, stay, down, shake," she said, Apollo has also been trained on more trauma specific commands, such as "block."

Blocking, she said, is a command given when a person needs a physical barrier between them and a crowd or another person to feel safe.

After Apollo graduated in May, he and Creighton have worked together at the SAPR office here.

Since Apollo came into training from a shelter, Creighton was given the opportunity of choosing a name for him.

Bringing Light, Healing to Those in Need

“I wanted a strong name that conveyed his mission within the SAPR office,” Creighton said. “It took a little time, but we decided on Apollo, which was the name of the Greek god of medicine, light, and healing. We hope he will bring light and healing to everyone he has contact with.”

Apollo is a trained therapy dog, not to be confused with a fully trained service dog. There are several differences between the two, but the most significant difference is a service dog is matched to work with one person performing specific tasks for that person each day. A therapy dog, like Apollo, is trained with the purpose of serving and helping multiple people that may need his time and love.

“Therapy dogs like Apollo offer time, comfort, and an unconditional and nonjudgmental love that people who have been victimized often feel they cannot receive from a human in that moment,” said Bethany Harris, the 131st Bomb Wing's director of psychological health. “Multiple studies have shown that sitting with or petting a dog lowers blood pressure, lifts spirits, slows down a person’s heart rate and has an overall calming effect.”

According to Creighton, Apollo’s mission is to be one of many “tools” in the toolbox of resources that the SAPR office has to offer survivors of sexual assault. There is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to working with victims of this crime, and the SAPR office’s goal is to offer as many options as possible to help victims onto their own personal path to healing and becoming a survivor.

Sajak now enjoys a new role as a family dog in Creighton’s home.

“I don’t think Sajak considers himself retired, really,” Creighton said. “Although he no longer travels into work with me each morning, it brings the whole family a great deal of comfort knowing that he will be waiting with his tail wagging to greet us when we get home each night.”

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